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List 33

BRIDGET RILEY

The Arts Council of Great Britain

Bridget Riley

Paintings and drawings 1961–1973

Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester
12 April – 9 May 1973

Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield
26 May – 17 June

D.L.I. Museum and Art Centre, Durham
23 June – 15 July

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh
21 July – 12 August

City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham
18 August – 9 September

Museum and Art Gallery, Letchworth
15 September – 7 October

City Art Gallery and Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol
8 December – 27 January 1974

Acknowledgements

Bridget Riley's work is much sought after. This touring exhibition could not possibly have been done without her direct and constant help, nor without the many items in it that come from her own collection. We thank her warmly for this, and for the time she has devoted to visiting the galleries where the exhibition is to be shown and suggesting the best possible arrangements for it.

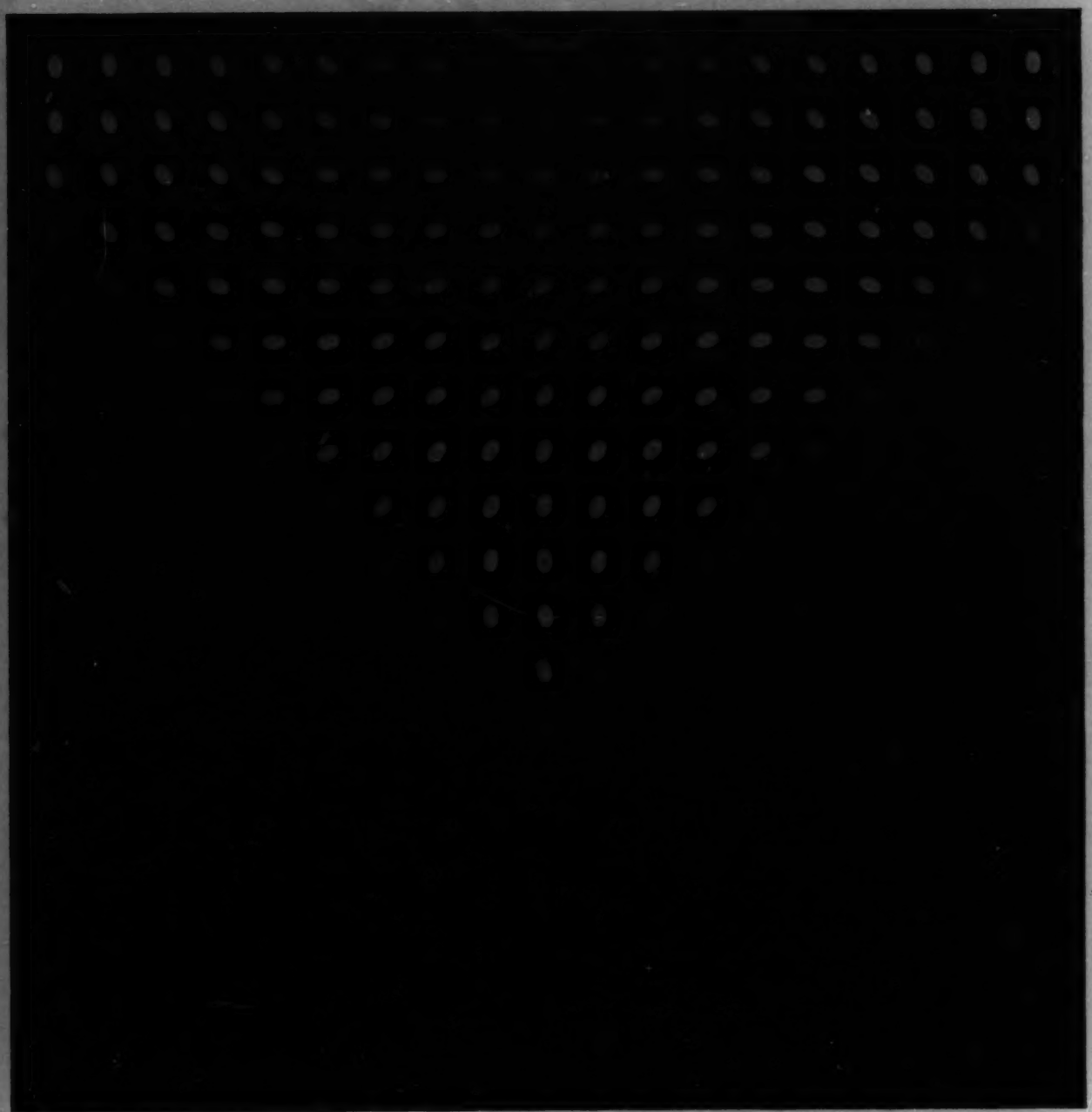
We are also particularly grateful to the other lenders who have allowed us to borrow their paintings for so long a time.

For collaboration and assistance in the preparation of the exhibition we are indebted to Mr Alec Gregory-Hood of the Rowan Gallery who has very kindly contributed two colour blocks to the catalogue : to the Fine Art Department of the British Council : and to Mr Robert Kudielka for permitting us to reproduce his interview with Bridget Riley, first published in the catalogue of her Göttingen exhibition.

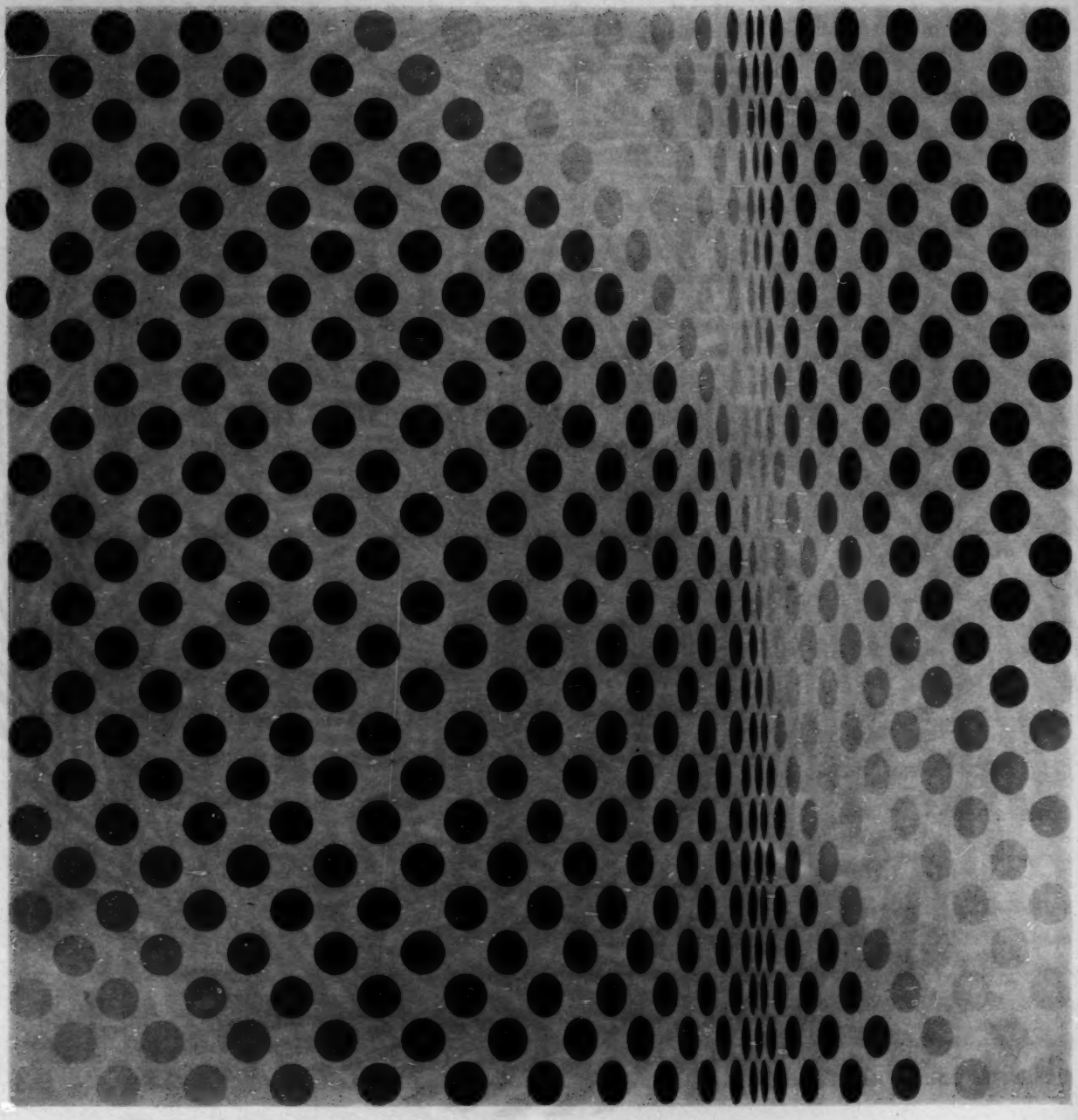
We acknowledge with thanks the invaluable help of Bridget Riley's assistants, Bob Quick, Peter Hanauer, Andrew Smith, and Rita Marshall.

Robin Campbell
Director of Art
Arts Council of Great Britain

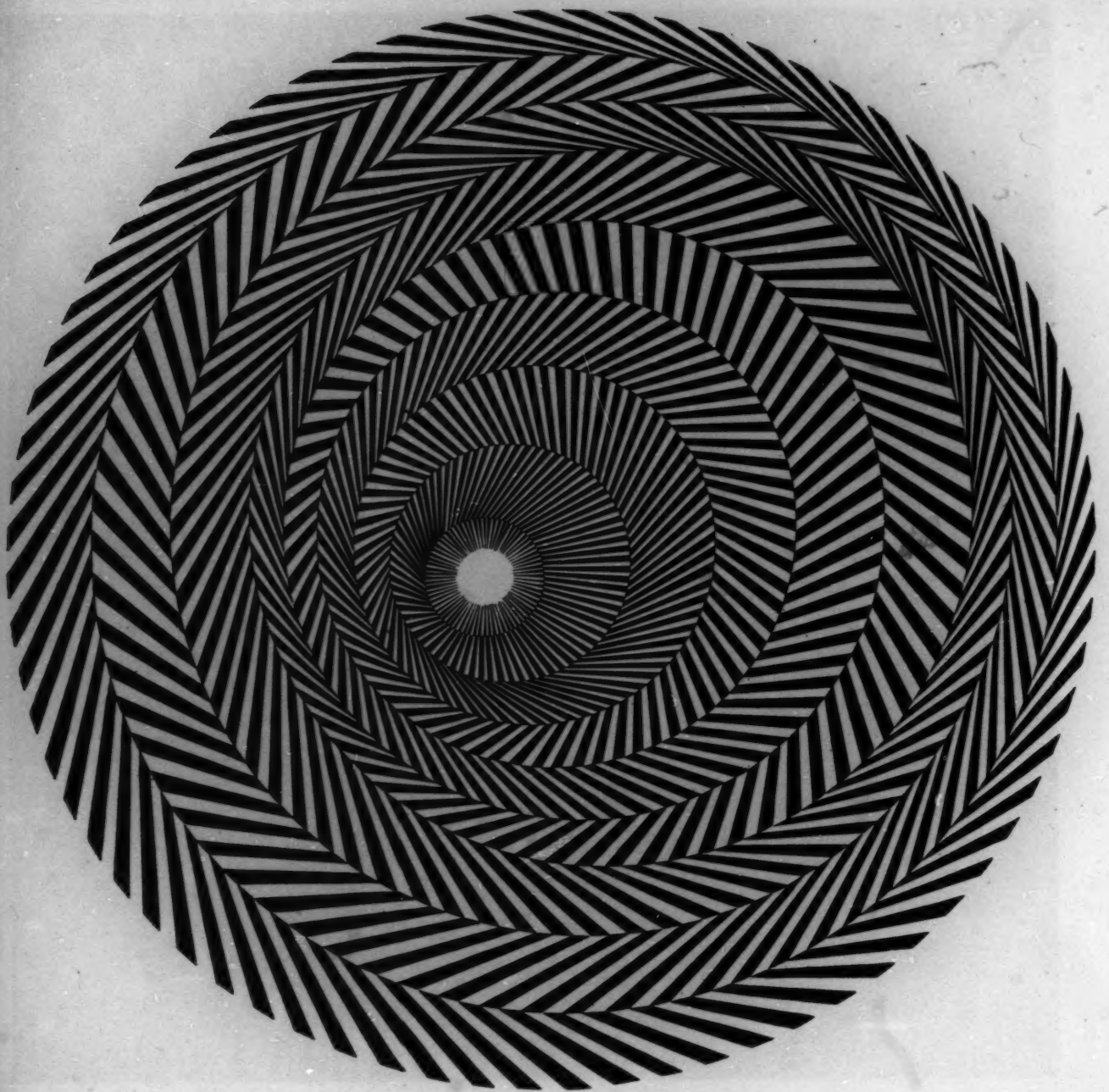
Norbert Lynton
Director of Exhibitions
Arts Council of Great Britain



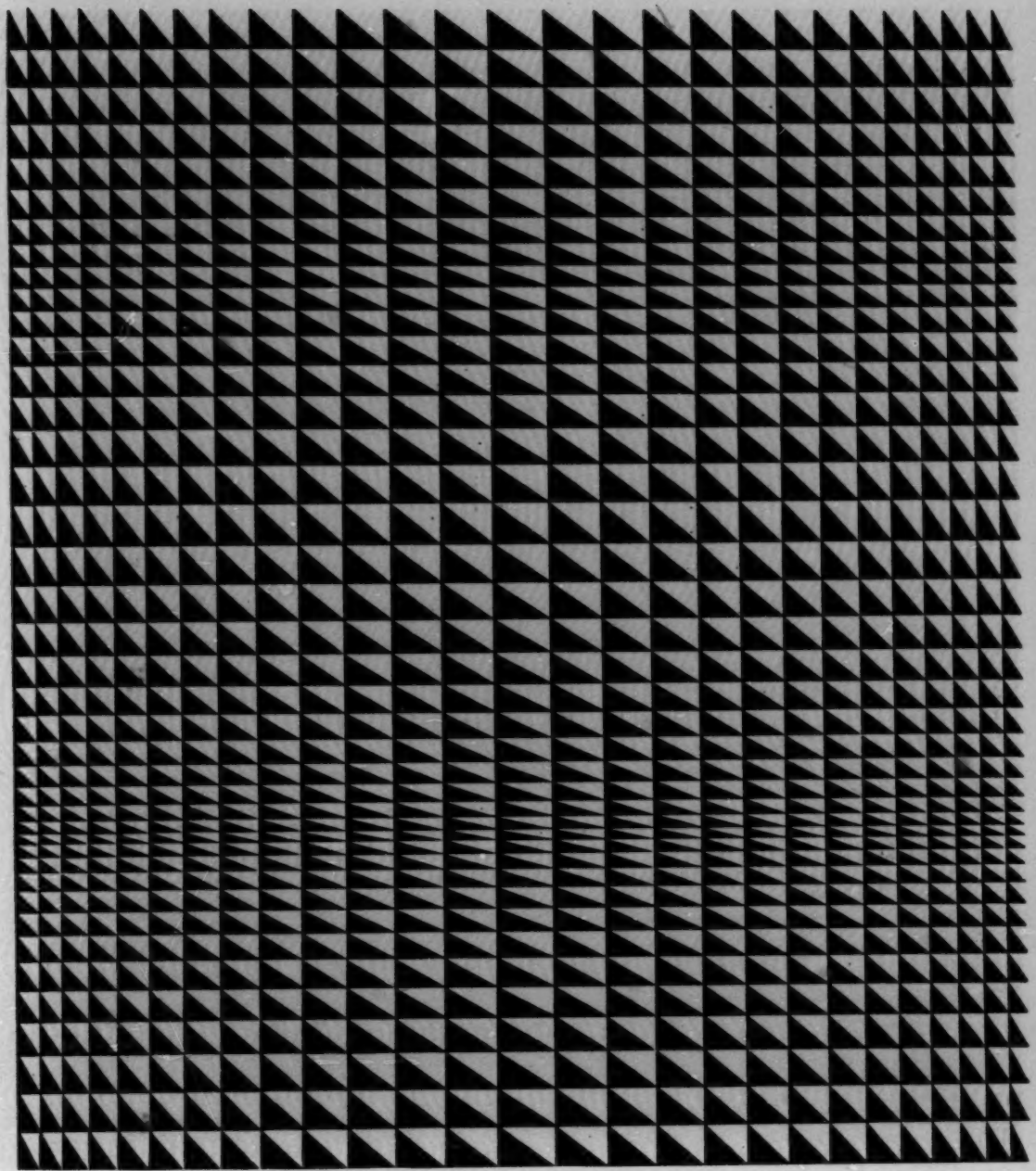
Nineteen Greys 1968 Cat. 10



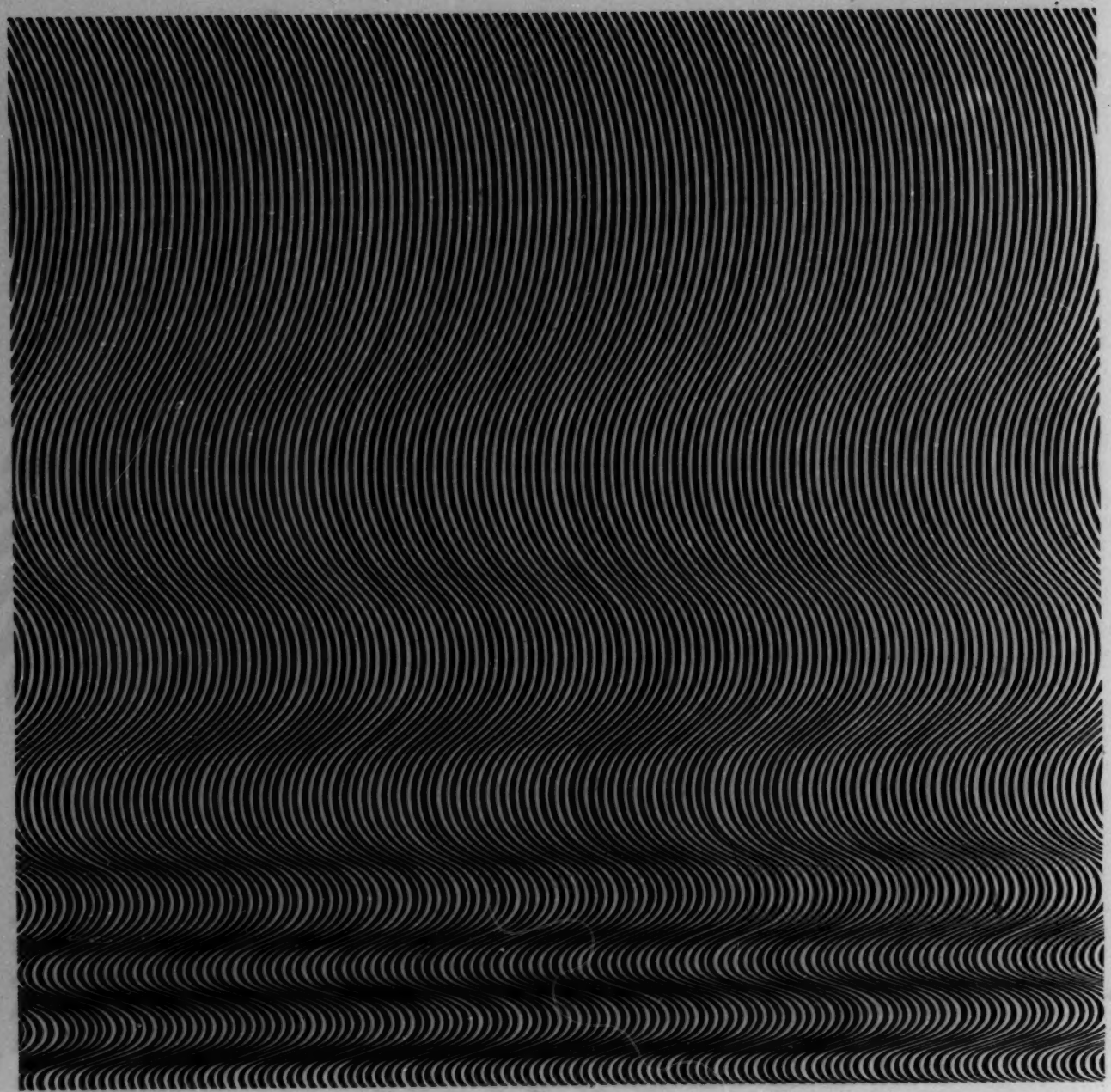
Pause 1964 Cat. 5



Blaze 3 1963 Cat. 23



Straight Curve Cat. 15



Fall 1963 Cat. 40

Bridget Riley in conversation with Robert Kudielka

RK: You are one of the few artists today who make preparatory studies. Why don't you work on the canvas directly?

BR: Well, that would be impossible for me because the structure of my paintings has to be precisely balanced. They need immaculate execution. I have to build up a bank of visual information first – about colours, forms, proportions, directions, etc. This is the essential basis to my work.

RK: What are the returns from this "bank"?

BR: The studies I make have different purposes. At the beginning I try to be as unselective as possible – to allow things to happen; later gradually tightening up until all aspects have been drawn together.

RK: How do you find your direction in this process?

BR: I proceed by trial and error – exploring and slowly establishing a particular situation. Obviously many studies will be discarded *en route* to a painting, though they are still interesting as visual statements.

RK: And yet, there is a difference between a study and a painting . . .

BR: There are several differences. The studies deal with aspects, the painting with totality. The studies are flexible and malleable, whereas the paintings are decisive and finite. And, of course, there is the obvious difference of scale.

RK: What does scale mean to you?

BR: Maybe scale could be compared to a key in music. Scale is not simply size, although size is a factor of scale. Changing the size of an image always means recreating its scale. I have to readjust and rebalance the factors involved. It is an act of perceptual equation. Sitting at your table and working on a study is quite different from your response to a painting which is hanging on the wall. There is no possibility of enlarging it automatically.

RK: If scale is the key in which your work is notated, what is the melody you are playing? Does it hum in the air or do you invent it?

BR: No – I take **something** – a colour – say yellow. What is yellow? Merely a name, an inert notion. But if you put a yellow with other colours, in different proportions and

positions, it starts to show a certain potential. It may appear lighter or darker, expand or flow into other colours, changing them. It could glow, advance or recede and so on. None of this behaviour you would know until you try. So right at the beginning I think . . . well, I just see what yellow can do.

RK: What about the forms you use?

BR: When I started, around 1960, forms such as triangles, squares, circles, rhomboids, etc. were no longer burdened by the heavy load of associations and symbolic overtones which they had carried in the 20's and 30's as Constructivist motifs. They were simple forms without any pretentions, in a condition for working with. Just "to hand".

RK: Yet there has been a change. The more you got involved with colour, the less explicit the forms became.

BR: In my recent colour work I have been using stripes, either parallel or twisting around each other, because they are unassertive forms. Form and colour seem to be fundamentally incompatible – they destroy each other. In my earlier work, when I was developing complex forms, the energies of the medium could only be fully released by simplifying colour to a black-and-white constant (with occasional grey sequences). Conversely colour energies need a virtually neutral vehicle if they are to develop uninhibited. The repeated stripe seems to meet these conditions.

RK: You think that a more elaborate shape would not be suitable?

BR: Well, take a green triangle – it has three points, three conflicting directions, there is a central volume in the form and an active edge exposure: all these factors add up to complexities which would effectively inhibit the green's expansion and mutability. I have always tried to avoid "colouring forms". I want to create a colour-form, not coloured forms.

RK: Are you concerned with perceptual principles?

BR: Well, look at the paintings. I'm not demonstrating any scientific principle, nor perceptual, arithmetical or geometrical. It doesn't interest me at all.

RK: I wonder what the context is within which you work?

BR: Relationships such as constancy and change – contrast and harmony – identity and contradiction – directions – rhythm – pace – repetition – accumulating and dispersing density.

RK: Let's take an example. What does the oval mean to you?

BR: In a sense the oval is a directional circle. Its range lies between the emphasis on direction on one hand (at the expense of its circularity), and emphasis on circularity

(at the expense of direction) on the other. An oval is very different in character at each extreme. When it is highly directional it is a light, fast form. As the directional aspect decreases the oval becomes heavy and static.

RK: But these dynamic relationships surely cannot be confined to single forms!

BR: Of course not. It is very important that finally each form relinquishes its separateness in the whole. It must be fully absorbed. So while it is necessary in the early stages to analyse each unit, my aim is to enable it to release sufficient energy to precipitate its dissolution in totality.

RK: So the single forms are the means to create a total situation?

BR: They are part of the medium with which I am working.

RK: Well, what **is** the medium?

BR: Superficially the medium seems to be identical with the means. And obviously this is true in a sense that, for the composer, actual notes or particular instruments are part of his medium. But the medium as a whole is the relationship of this sort of means between themselves and me. I am, like the musician, a kind of "listener-in" – over-hearing potential activities.

RK: "Listener" – that's a beautiful description, and a paradox, too. Because in this case the listener is also the speaker. After all, you produce paintings.

BR: Yes – for quite a long time I was embarrassed by using the word "I", the first person, in relation to my work – I much preferred to say "one", because I felt that this thing, the medium, was so strong and rich, that I was just an agent who caught these various inflections and allowed them to play their own thing – freely.

RK: What do you mean, to allow things to "play freely"?

BR: When these elements are **not** asked to do something which is against their nature – (not asked to serve concepts or to represent) – **then** I think that they are allowed to "play freely" – to show their vitality. But there are hazards, for instance, of merely recording automatically in a random kind of way. These energies are, in a proper sense, "wild" – one can easily be overwhelmed, carried away. This results in images which are virtually inaccessible, beyond perception, in fact. And yet this is the *core* of the medium and it is in this area that fruitful dialogue takes place. It is not only a one-way relationship of taming the wild, but can also be the reverse. I am supported by the medium but at the risk of being overwhelmed by it – the medium both carries you and threatens to carry you away. I don't trust a painting unless it has had this period – it is the only route by which to avoid the decorative or the academic.

RK: The opposite of the wild is the decorative.

BR: The known, which is easy to handle, easy to arrange, because you are completely familiar with the relationships. Their vitality has been sapped – their energy used up – their teeth, so to speak, have been drawn.

RK: I wonder how far this polarity of the medium affects the spectator. The subject of your earlier black-and-white work, for instance, is movement . . .

BR: There are at least two notions of movement. The "one-dimensional" movement, which has to do with progression. Movement described on the picture plane itself.

RK: It's readable –

BR: Yes – but as you look at the painting you become involved in another kind of movement as a total experience which happens in time, successively, **between** you and the canvas – the graphic movement anticipates this kind of experience.

RK: So in one case it is traditional, descriptive movement, like Futurism, movement opposed to stability. The other is movement **not** opposed to stability but occurring simultaneously – in a sense, even provoked by stability, as in "Descending".

BR: That's perfectly true. And this interplay between movement and stability is paralleled in my recent work by the interplay of light and colour. The colours painted on the canvas can be identified as certain hues – but as one looks at the painting one sees a luminous disembodied light, variously coloured.

RK: I see, you don't "describe" light **by** colour.

BR: No, I don't paint light. I present a colour situation which releases light as you look at it.

RK: That means that the painting doesn't exist *factually*.

BR: No, in a way, it only comes to life when looked at from a certain distance.

RK: If you stand close to the canvas you just see colour –

BR: Yes – objective hues, say cerise, olive, turquoise –

RK: But if you stand too far away from the painting?

BR: You only see a nebulous grey. The painting has eluded you.

RK: And between these two extremes – the experience you intend?

BR: The area of activity – of light.

RK: So light is also something which happens between two polarities: the stable body of colour – . . .

BR: And its absolute dissolution. When grey eclipses the light, the painting is unable to offer anything.

RK: Is that how the spectator experiences the medium?

BR: Yes, he is probably caught in a dialogue similar to my own. It is interesting to watch people looking at a painting because without any prompting they try to relate themselves to it – they try to find a position in which the thing works for them. A point from which they can experience it. People vary a little – as to how much or how little they can be involved – they unconsciously choose their own relationship to the painting.

RK: Do they choose? They listen.

BR: Yes – to make the painting speak.

Robert Kudielka April 1972

Biography

1931 Born in London

1939–45 During this period Bridget Riley lived with her mother, sister and an aunt in Cornwall whilst her father was away in the army. Her education was meagre and often interrupted.

1946–48 Attended Cheltenham Ladies' College where she was freed from the restrictions of the normal curriculum and allowed to choose her own course of study.

1949–52 Became a student at The Goldsmiths' College of Art, where she was taught by Sam Rabin who awoke her enthusiasm for drawing.

1952–55 Studied in the painting school of The Royal College of Art where her contemporaries were Dick Smith, Peter Blake, Frank Auerbach and John Bratby. A painting of hers was exhibited in the 1955 Young Contemporaries exhibition.

1955–58 The beginning of a clear direction in her creative thinking was partly linked with **The Developing Process** exhibition at the ICA and partly through the confrontation with American post-war art in an exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1956. Her self-confidence was strengthened by her experience of teaching children, and in her work with the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency

1959 Visited Spain and Portugal, taught at Loughborough College of Art.

1960 Summer spent in Italy, visiting galleries and painting. Was impressed by the work of the Futurists, in particular that of Boccioni and Balla, also by Italian architecture and the frescoes of Piero della Francesca at Arezzo. In the Autumn she taught part-time at the Hornsey College of Art in the Department of Fine Art which was then under the direction of Maurice de Sausmarez. Her colleagues on the staff included John Hoyland and Allen Jones.

1962 First one-man exhibition held at Gallery One. Taught part-time at Croydon School of Art.

1963 Met Anton Ehrenzweig who wrote the foreword for her second one-man show at Gallery One. The first major critical essay on the artist's work was also written by Ehrenzweig and appeared in 1965 in Art International. Also in this year she was awarded a prize in the open section of the John Moore's exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool.

1964 Work represented in the **New Generation** exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, in **Painting and Sculpture of a Decade** at the Tate Gallery, in the Carnegie International at Pittsburgh, and in the **Nouvelles Tendences** exhibition at the Musée des Art Décoratif, in Paris.

1965 Increasing international recognition came with the **Responsive Eye** exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and her one-man show also in New York at the Richard Feigen Gallery.

1966 First exhibition at the Robert Fraser Gallery in London.

1967 A further one-man show at the Richard Feigen Gallery, New York.

1969 Won the International Prize for Painting at the XXXIV Biennale in Venice. In the same year, Bridget Riley worked with Peter Sedgley, on the formation of SPACE, a scheme for the organisation of studios for artists.

1969 In January SPACE was established at St. Katherine's Dock in London where Bridget Riley continued to work until the scheduled redevelopment caused this organisation to move two years later, on to other sites. Exhibitions of her drawings and prints were shown at the Bear Lane Gallery in Oxford, The Midland Group Gallery in Nottingham, The Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol, and The Rowan Gallery in London.

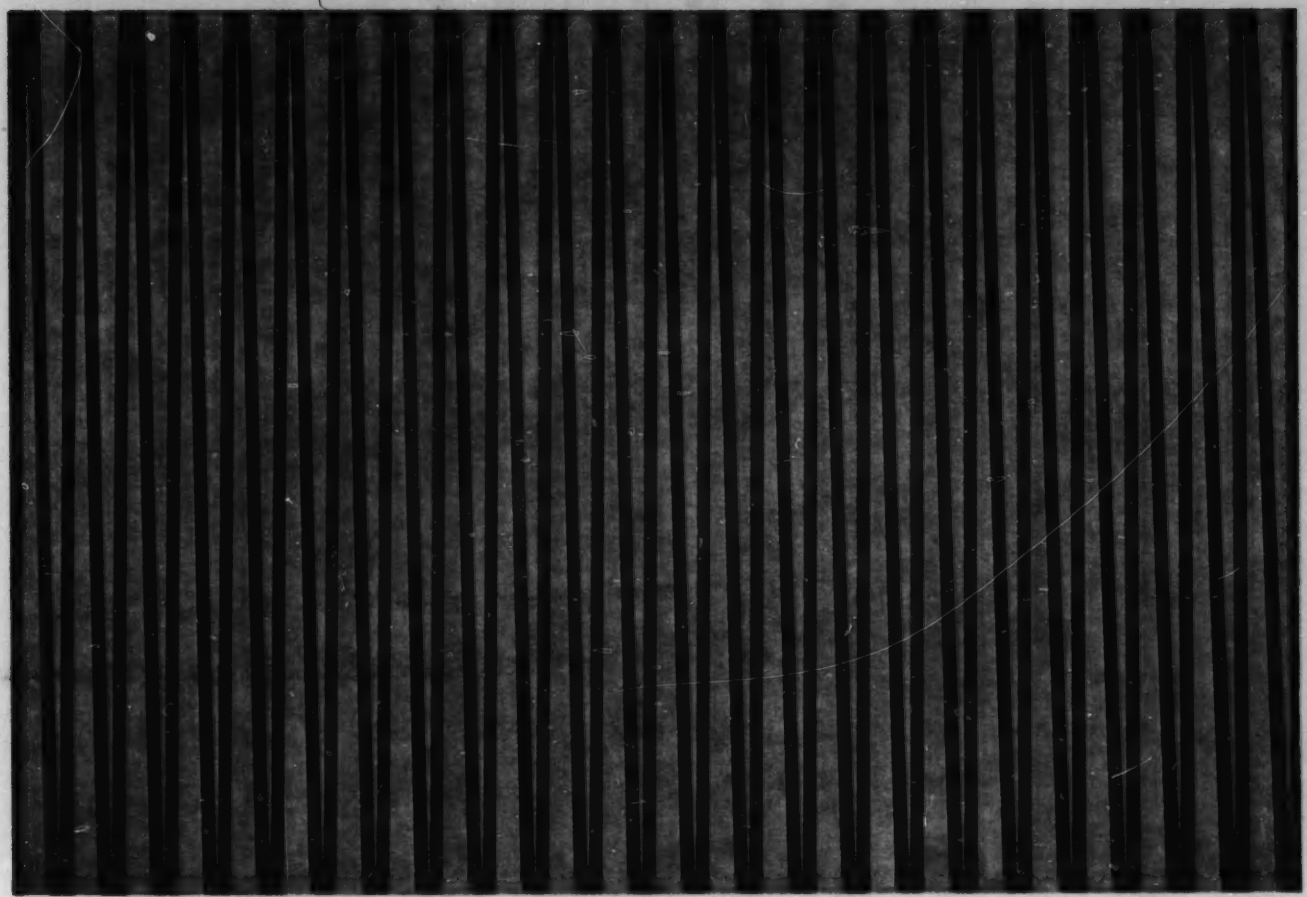
1970 Beginning of her major 1970–71 European touring exhibition at the Kunstverein in Hanover. A monograph on the artist's work written by Maurice de Sausmarez, was published by Studio Vista.

1971 The European exhibitions continued at the Kunsthalle in Berne, The Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf and the Museo Civico in Turin. These were followed by the major Arts Council exhibition of drawings and paintings from 1951–71 at the Hayward Gallery and the final European exhibition at the National Gallery in Prague. The Rowan Gallery in London held an exhibition of drawings.

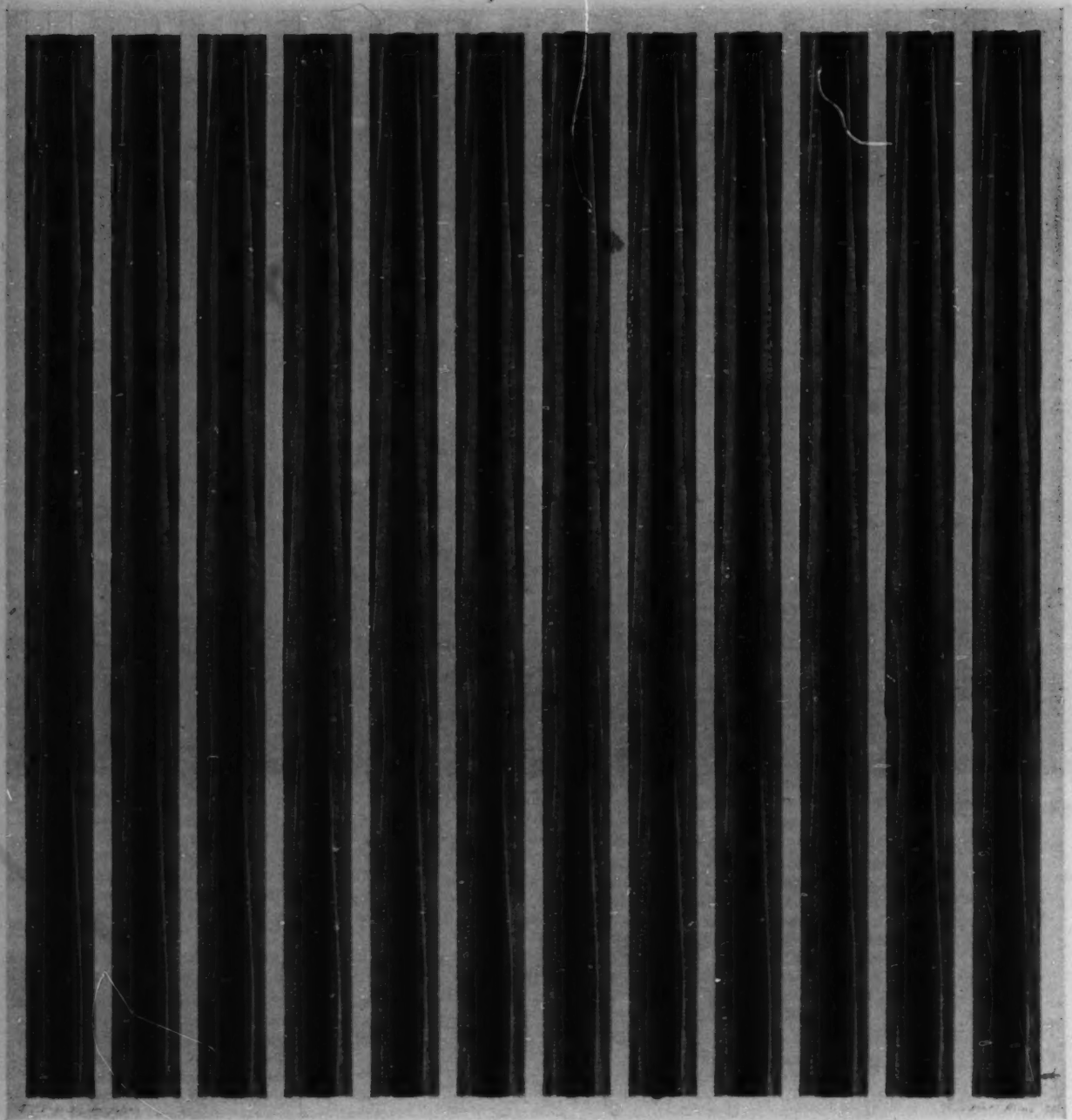
1972 Bridget Riley continued to participate in international exhibitions and a further exhibition of drawings was held at the Rowan Gallery.

1973 The Arts Council's British touring exhibition of drawings and paintings 1961–73.

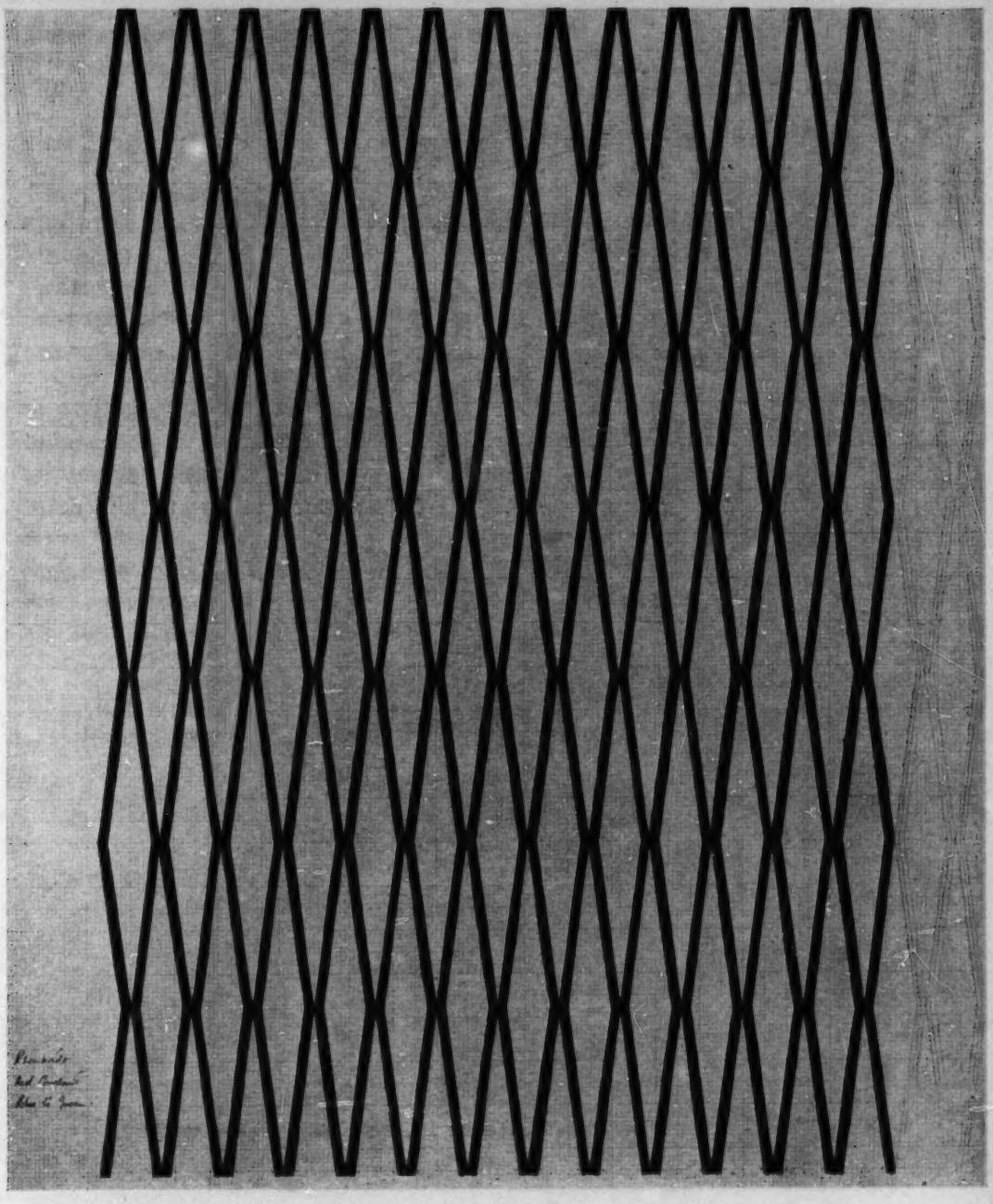
Lives and works in London.



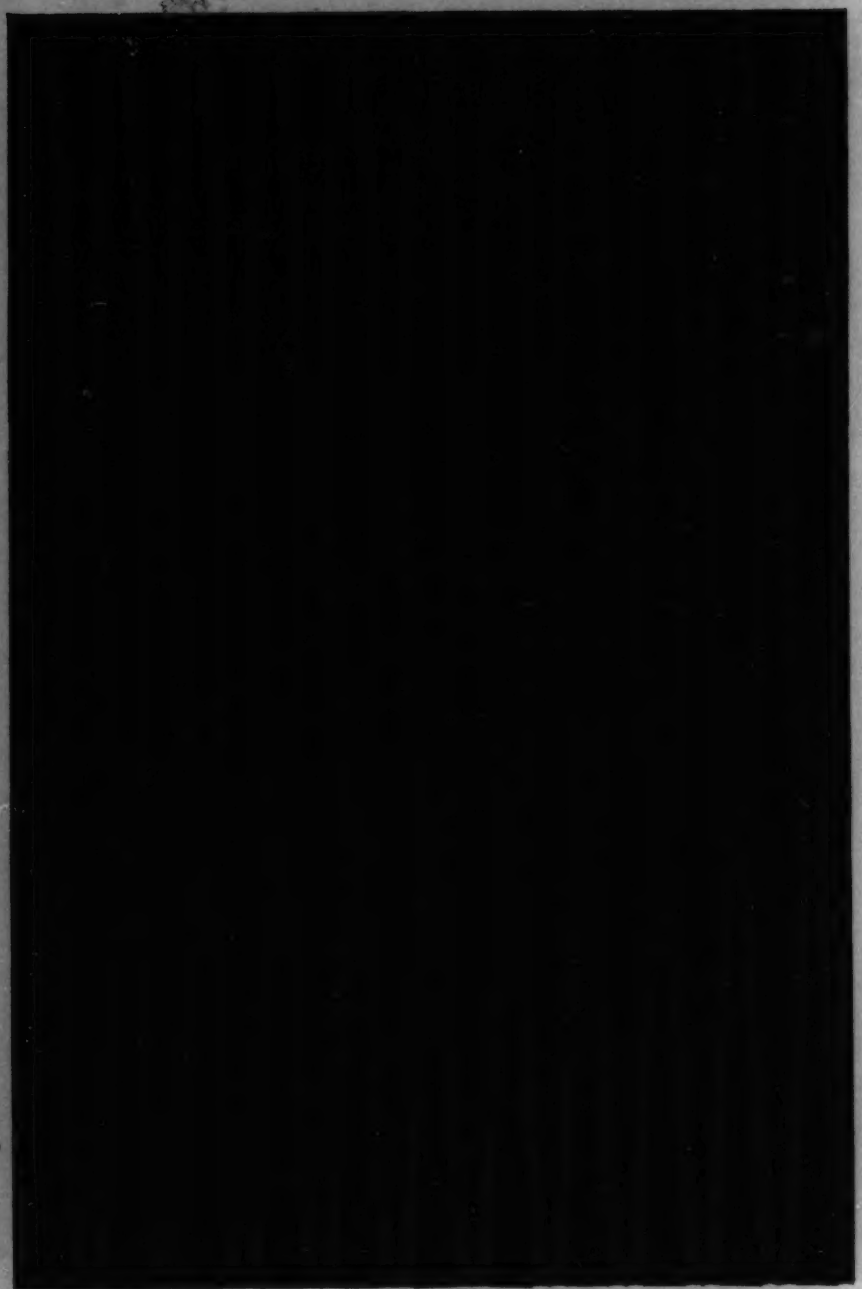
Orient 4 1970 Cat. 60



Final Study for Painting, Halcyon 1972 Cat. 83



Rhomboids: red constant, blue to green 1972 Cat. 84



Twisted rhomboids with grey 1972 Cat. 89

Lenders to the exhibition

The Arts Council of Great Britain
The British Council, London
Mr. and Mrs. Neville Burston
Joanna Drew
Sebastian de Ferranti
Robert Kudielka
The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester
Victor Musgrave
Bridget Riley
Mr. and Mrs. Jack Riley
Sarah Riley
Bryan Robertson
Rowan Gallery, London
Peter Sedgley
The Tate Gallery

Paintings and Drawings

The paintings listed below are those selected for the opening exhibition at The Whitworth Art Gallery of the University of Manchester. At later showings the number of works exhibited will vary according to the size of the galleries.

Sizes are given in centimetres, height before width. The size of the drawings is sheet size, except where otherwise stated.

Drawings are lent by the artist except where otherwise stated. Reference numbers after the titles are to the artist's own records.

1 **Kiss**
1961
Tempera on board, 122 × 122
Collection Bryan Robertson

2 **Movement in Squares**
1961
Tempera on board, 122 × 122
Collection Arts Council of Great Britain

3 **Zig-Zag**
1961
Tempera on hardboard, 80 × 108

4 **Black to white disks**
1961–62
Emulsion on canvas, 178 × 178

5 **Pause**
1964
Emulsion on board, 115·5 × 116
Collection Mr and Mrs Jack Riley

6 **Fragments No. 7**
1965
Silkscreen on plexiglass, 67 × 84

7 **Study for Deny 3** R523
1966
Gouache on paper, exp. face of drawing 30 cm diamond, 40·8 cm on both long axes

8 **Study for Deny** R528
1966
Gouache on paper, exp. face of drawing 30 cm diamond, 40·8 cm on both long axes

9 **Untitled**
1966
Emulsion on canvas, 150 × 150

10 **Nineteen Greys (set of four prints)**
1968
Silkscreen prints on card, 76 × 76

11 **Untitled study** R722
1968
Gouache on graph paper, 71 × 104

12 **Turquoise and magenta encircling olive disks** R931
1970
Gouache on graph paper, 62·5 × 28

13 **Final scale study: olive, turquoise, cerise spot grid** R940
1970
Gouache and pencil on paper, 50·8 × 69

14 **Red blue open disks** R1010
1971
Gouache on paper, 67·5 × 67·5

15 **Straight Curve**
1963
Emulsion on board, 71 × 61·5
Collection Victor Musgrave

16 **Final study for Shift** R210
1963
Ink and pencil on paper, 48·5 × 38

17 **Study (Ascending-Descending: Hero)** R211
1963
Ink and pencil on paper, 56 × 37

18 **Burn**
1964
Emulsion on board, 56 × 56

19 **Study for Turn** R321
1964
Gouache and pencil on paper, 35 × 37

20 **Untitled study** R423
1965
Gouache and pencil on paper, 33·5 × 50·9

21 **Search**
1966
Emulsion on board, 89·5 × 89·5
Collection Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester

22 **Cerise, turquoise, mustard interlaced triangles** R1036
1971
Gouache on graph paper, 43 × 45·6

23 **Blaze 3**
1963
Emulsion on board, 94·5 × 94·5
Collection Mr and Mrs Jack Riley

24 **Climax**
1963
Emulsion on wood, 91·3 × 100

25 **Untitled study** R212
1963
Gouache and pencil on graph paper, 89 × 114

26 **Study for Twist** R214
1963
Gouache and pencil on graph paper, 34 × 22·5

27 **Study for Cast** R425
1965
Gouache and pencil on paper, 28 × 32

28 **Untitled (Shuttle)** R426
1965
Ink on graph paper, 26·5 × 22

29 **Study for Fragments print** R444
1965
Gouache on paper, 50·9 × 36

30 **Descending**
1965–66
Emulsion on board, 91·3 × 91·3
Collection Sarah Riley

31 **Green blue red chevron twist** R1017
1971
Gouache on paper, 44·5 × 40·5

32 **Blue diagonals on orange and ochre bands** R1034
1971
Gouache on cream paper, 80 × 78

33 **White Disks II**
1964
Emulsion on board, 104 × 99
Collection Peter Sedgley

34 **Fragments No. 4**
1965
Plexiglass print, 71 × 68·5

35 **Study for Static II** R506
1966
Biro and pencil on tracing paper, 50·8 × 130·2

36 **Orange, violet, green, grey curves** R841
1961
Gouache on paper, 46 × 48
Collection Robert Kudielka

37 **Study for Polarity** R328
1964
Gouache and pencil on paper, 46·5 × 40

38 **Arrest 4**
1965
Emulsion on board, 186 × 190·5
Collection Sebastian de Ferranti

39 **Fragments No. 2**
1965
Silkscreen on plexiglass, 69 × 71

40 **Fall**
1963
Emulsion on board, 141 × 140·5
Collection Trustees of the Tate Gallery

41 **Study for painting, Arrest 3** R420
1965
Gouache and pencil on graph paper, 34 × 71

42 **Right-angle curve** R512
1966
Gouache and pencil on paper, 58·5 × 55·9

43 **Right-angle curve** R519
1966
Gouache and pencil on graph paper, 71·1 × 52·1

44 **Red greys on red (curve)** R529
1966
Gouache and pencil on graph paper, 67·5 × 43·5

45 **Cataract 3**
1967
Emulsion PVA on linen, 221·9 × 222·9
Collection British Council, London

46 **Study for Cataract series** R613
1967
Gouache on graph paper, 43 × 33

47 **Turquoise and red greys (scale study for Cataract series)** R635
1967
Gouache on paper, 93·5 × 29

48 **Scale study for Cataract series No. 1** R636
1967
Gouache on graph paper, 37 × 42

49 **Red and turquoise greys (curve)** R637
1967
Gouache on graph paper, 41 × 61

50 **Turquoise and red curves (Japanese)** R825
1969
Gouache and pencil on graph paper, 29·5 × 68·6
Collection Joanna Drew

51 **Untitled** R843
1969
Gouache and pencil on graph paper, 36 × 49·5

52 **Coloured greys (set of 3 prints)**
1972
Silkscreen on paper, 75 × 69

53 **Chant 1**
1967
PVA on canvas, 178 × 178

54 **Final study for Chant 2 (darker blue)** R634
1967
Gouache on paper, 69 × 101·2

55 **Blue and green surrounded by red (Chant format)** R718
1968
Gouache on paper, 101·2 × 69

56 **Studies using yellows (Sheet I)** R820
1969
Gouache on graph paper, 68·5 × 101·2

57 **Pale magenta, blue, green band study (expanded whites)** R822
1969
Gouache on paper, 101·6 × 68·9

58 **Orange, violet and green (vertical)** R823
1969
Gouache on paper, 69 × 37·5

59 **Study for Gamelan** R839
1969
Gouache on paper, 69 × 157·5

60 **Orient 4**
1970
Acrylic on canvas, 223·5 × 323
Collection Rowan Gallery, London

61 **Pink and turquoise surrounding grey and black** R908
1970
Gouache on paper, 69 × 53·1

62 **Punjab**
1971
Acrylic on canvas, 143 × 365
Collection Rowan Gallery, London

63 **Veld**
1971
Acrylic on canvas, 191 × 391·2
Collection Rowan Gallery, London

64 **Cantus Firmus**
1972
Cryla on canvas, 240·5 × 214
Collection Rowan Gallery, London

65 **Untitled**
1972
Cryla on canvas, 152·5 × 365

66 **Cornwall, horizontal study** R1101
1972
Gouache on graph paper, 53 × 58·5

67 **Cornwall, vertical study** R1102
1972
Gouache on graph paper, 57 × 53

68 **Final Cartoon for Fade** R1145
1972
Gouache on paper on linen, 161 × 147·5

69 **Bright red, blue and green verticals (Cartoon)** R1146
1972
Gouache on paper on linen, 75 × 266

70 **Red, blue and green surrounding one another** R1149
1972
Gouache on graph paper, 49·5 × 64

71 **Orange, rose, lilac, crossing light green** R716
1968
Gouache on paper, 102 × 38·5

72 **Vapour**
1970
Acrylic on canvas, 96 × 90
Collection Mr and Mrs Jack Riley

73 **Turquoise diagonals** R913
1970
Gouache on paper, 49·5 × 69

74 **Zing I**
1971
Acrylic on canvas, 101·6 × 88·9

75 **Firebird**
1971
Silkscreen on paper, 101·2 × 76

76 **Five Museum Prints**
1971
Silkscreen on paper, 101·2 × 40·5

77 **Turquoise and ochre on grey** R1031
1971
Gouache on graph paper, 65 × 43

78 **Magenta and turquoise with grey** R1032
1971
Gouache on paper, 62·5 × 39

79 **Olive, turquoise and cerise twist; rhomboid format** R1108
1971
Gouache on paper, 78·7 × 70

80 **Arcane**
1972
Acrylic on canvas, 98·5 × 94·6

81 **Final study for Painting** R1106
1972
Gouache on paper, 103·5 × 99·2

82 **Halcyon**
1972
Acrylic on canvas, 80 × 86·6

83 **Final Study for Painting, Halcyon** R1107
1972
Gouache on paper, 96 × 91·3

84 **Rhomboids; red constant, blue to green** R845
1972
Gouache on graph paper, 71 × 56·2

85 **Greys surrounded by ochre, turquoise and magenta twist** R1103
1972
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86 **Ochre with turquoise, blue and violet on grey** R1128
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